President:
Tom Titmus
299-2030

Lafayette Historical Society

POST OFFICE BOX 133 LAFAYETTE, CALIF. 94549

NEWS

Lafayette, California | April 2002 | Vol. 29, No. 1

LHS Annual "Pot Luck" Dinner

Date: Tuesday, May 14, 2002
Time: 6pm Social Hour
7pm Dinner
8pm Short business meeting followed by
Speaker: Jop Van Overveen
Place: Lafayette Veterans Hall
Mt. Diablo Blvd. & First Street in Lafayette

How It works: Held in the traditional Veterans Hall location, the 2002 Pot Luck will kick off with a no-host social hour at 6pm. Dinner at 7pm consists of salads and casseroles brought by the participants. You choose which of your favorite dishes you would like to bring. Whichever it is, it should serve 6-8 people. LHS will provide the wine and coffee. The Directors will bring the desert.

***Please Note:** Annual Membership Fees are due at this point. Please fill out the form on the page 7 of the Newsletter. Thank you.

President's Message

Four years ago, the city of Lafayette celebrated thirty years of incorporation. Now it is our turn. This year, the Lafayette Historical Society moves into its thirtieth year of action as a non-profit corporation – and we certainly qualify as non-profit! LHS evolved from the Lafayette Historical Materials Committee that was put together by members from the Lafayette Library Association and the Lafayette Design Project. It appears that some folks recognized the importance of preserving identities that might be lost I the storms of a corporate city structure. Our records indicate that nine brave souls signed and verified the Constitution and Bylaws of the Lafayette Historical Society on the twenty-ninth day of January 1973.

Is it time to keep moving with community improvement as well as remembrance? Sure it is! That has been part of the LHS mission from the beginning. Reviewing past efforts and accomplishments as well as learning from past mistakes and "what might have been" helps to keep progress in motion. If you lay down too long, they start throwing dirt on you.

Our annual meeting will feature a speaker or speakers who will examine the history of local business and community growth. Incidentally, we have received a donation of over fifty years of past issues of the *Lafayette Sun*, now a part of the *Contra Costa Times*. These copies were obtained through the generosity of Jennifer Shaw. We thank you Jennifer. We would also like to thank Mary McCosker for "babysitting" those issues until another location is obtained. Marechal Duncan will give us the scoop on the new library rumors. The new Lafayette Library, when it arrives, shall include an area dedicated to Lafayette history. Happy springtime to all!

By Tom Titmus

We Have a Site for the New Lafayette Library!

As Gayle Uilkema, Supervisor District 2, stated in her article printed in the Wednesday, March 20, 2002, Contra Costa Times, "It is my sincere hope that a memorandum of understanding will be adopted in the near future and progress on the new facilities will begin."

The parties involved in signing this Memorandum are: The Lafayette City Council, the Lafayette Redevelopment Agency, the Walnut Creek City Council, the Walnut Creek Redevelopment Agency, and the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors.

At the present time, it appears to be positive that the Lafayette and Walnut Creek veterans will have a new, modern facility located at the Western end of Lafayette, and Lafayette will have a site for their new Library. The Library site will be the existing Veteran's building that is located at the corner of Mount Diablo Boulevard and First Street, one of the most prominent and desirable parcels of land in the city.

As stated in the Lafayette Community Foundation's Annual Report 2001, the citizens of Lafayette have already donated $395,918 for the new Library Building Fund. This included $128,459 from the Lafayette Historical Society, and a few of its members for a History Room. The exact form of this History Room has certainly not been decided upon at this early date, but it will provide for the display of many of our archives that are currently housed in our members' closets, bedrooms, garages, etc.

We are asking for each member's full support, so that the Lafayette Historical Society's portion of the new Library will be one of which we are proud. If any members have questions, please call Marechal Duncan at (925) 283-6812, or send him an e-mail at marechaldoris@yahoo.com.

By Marechal Duncan

The Brief Life of Brown's Mill

As we know from the story of John Stuart's lumber mill at Coloma, lumber mills were rare in early California. So too were flourmills. Thus, enterprising men seeking to fulfill local needs and seizing the economic opportunity, went into the milling business.

One such man was "Mr. Wetmore," who brought with him to California, two horse-powered gristmills, but his plans were thwarted. One mill was destroyed in the San Francisco Fire of 1849, while he took the other "with the horse powers" to Benicia, and in 1853, sold its millstones to "Esp. Elam Brown of Lafayette."

Wetmore sold the railway horsepower to Bethnel Phelps and Dr. Robert Semple, founder of Benicia. This was a great improvement over their scow-ferry, which had been sailing across Carquinez Strait to Martinez, a treacherous crossing. This improved ferry was employed for about a year until a small steamer replaced it.

Having acquired the millstones, Brown set up his flour mill, the first in Contra Costa County, by the creek about 132 feet from the Eastern boundary of Rancho Acalanes, not far from the remaining millstone now seen in Lafayette's Plaza. Thus, local farmers could avoid the lengthy trip to the Sansevain mill in San Jose. At his new mill, Brown sold flour for fourteen dollars a barrel, or at a reduced price if mud and dirt on the grain made it less desirable. Brown's Flour Mill operated until one night in March 1865 when fire completely destroyed the mill and all its contents, including all the wheat and flour. Only "by the greatest exertion" was Benjamin Shreve's store and home saved. The cause of this fire remained a mystery.

Now the history of succeeding mills accelerates. In 1866, Philander H. Standish, using new equipment, established the Lafayette Flour and Grist Mills and opened a Walnut Creek Depot at The Corners, to receive grain and grist destined for the Lafayette operation.

Less than a year later, Standish and Captain Oliver C. Coffin of Martinez announced their "co-partnership." They bought and sold grain and flour and operated a Walnut Creek warehouse. Within a few years, a defective crown sheet of the boiler firebox at the mill gave way. Fortunately, the workmen were not injured, and the auxiliary safety valve put out the fire in the firebox. However, in 1870, Warren Brown took over "The Flour Mills at Lafayette," since Coffin and Standish could not meet the mortgage payments.

Next, Frank Hammett entered the picture, reporting in 1878 that he had leased the Lafayette Flour Mill. He intended to hire a "first class miller"

and would guarantee satisfaction. All must not have been satisfactory for Hammet because within a year Warren Brown leased the mill and all its equipment to C.F. Leavenworth for $400 a year in gold coin with right of purchase for $1500 in gold coin, less previous lease payments. Leavenworth, it was reported, would move the operation to Walnut Creek at the end of the milling season; but the saga was not quite over. In 1880, he moved the entire operation, including equipment, to Modesto.

As Frank Hough wrote to his brother George at Hough's Springs, "Warren Brown has sold the mill to a man by the name of Leavenworth he is going to get an other boiler he has taken the old one out and has got it on a wagon and Papa and Mr. [?] are going to take the boiler down to morrow he is going to run it here this season but he is going to move it down to walnut creek. Good knight."

By Ruth Dyer

(The major source of this material is The Dorothy Mutnick Collection found in The History Center [CCHS]. Mrs. Mutnick's notes were taken from issues of the Gazette and the Contra Costa Weekly Gazette Semi-, 1865-1880.)

"Old Betsy" The Fire Engine

In previous writings about "Old Betsy," the FORD Model T Fire Engine, we have described the process of determining the age of the vehicle. It seems clear that the engine in vintage 1920. That makes the engine as old, or about the age of many who are members of this Historical Society.

If all vehicles were exactly the same regardless of age, there would probably never be a problem in servicing or repairing the engine or body parts. But there have been many changes since the Model T was manufactured and sold. Fortunately, there are books that describe, in great detail, how the Model T works, how its parts go together, and how to perform repair services. We have several of those books in our collection thanks to donations from the libraries of our members.

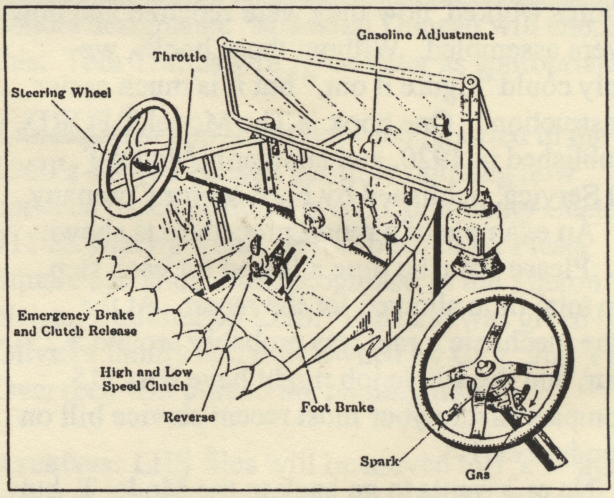

Fig. 42.—The Control System of the Ford Model T Car.

Back to what was then and what is now. The figure above shows " THE CONTROL SYSTEM OF THE FORD MODEL T CAR." It does not look like any current car regardless of who makes it. There is no accelerator pedal; that function is performed by the throttle control just below and on the right side of the steering wheel. There are three pedals on the floor that are used to control forward, reverse and braking. The pedal on the right is the brake. The pedal on the left is forward (LOW and HIGH). The pedal in the middle is reverse. To go forward you push down on the left pedal for starting (LOW gear) and then release the pedal for running (HIGH gear). To place the transmission in NEUTRAL, push the left pedal half way down. For REVERSE, hold the left pedal in NEUTRAL and then push down on the middle pedal. Note that both feet are being used so there needs to be some other way to provide more gas to speed the engine. That is where the throttle is used. Moving that lever around the steering column clockwise increases the gas to the engine. If you are in reverse, you have both feet working, the right hand (or fingers) working, and both hands on the steering wheel. It sounds complicated, but it becomes automatic after you learn how.

The emergency brake and clutch release works as the parking brake and also places the transmission into NEUTRAL. The transmission is a planetary gearing system; that will need explanation in another article.

All of the above are why the books are important. Our memory cannot keep all these details in order. FORD (and others) produced books with extensive illustrations and details on

how things worked, how they were repaired and how they were assembled. Without those books, we probably could "figure it out," but it is much easier with instructions. One book is The Model T FORD Car, published in 1920, and another is Model T FORD Service, published by Ford Motor Company.

An example of a repair procedure is shown below. Please note the time allowed for each step, and the total time allowed for the repair. At the time, the mechanic's rate was probably around $.25 per hour, and the whole job might have cost $15. Just compare that to your most recent service bill on your modern car!

No one wants to go back to the Model T, but it is good to know that these old vehicles survive, operate, and can still be repaired with the many parts that are still available.

By George Wasson

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Time Study

Engine and Transmission Overhaul

		Hrs.	Min.
1	Install car covers on front fenders, running board, steering wheel and upholstery		5
2	Remove engine from chassis		38
3	Wash engine		10
4	Disassemble engine and wash all parts		40
5	Ream valve and push rod guides		22
6	Reseat valve seats in cylinder block and grind valves	1	10
7	Rebore cylinder block		55
8	Rebabbitt cylinder block and bore out bearings		35
9	Fit crankshaft, run in bearings		45
10	Fit pistons, connecting rods, push rods, camshaft and gears, run in	1	55
11	Assemble valves and springs, and check timing of engine		20
12	Overhaul transmission, including checking and replacing magnets	1	50
13	Assemble magneto coil, feed pipe, transmission to cylinder block		18
14	Replace cylinder head, valve cover, cylinder front cover and fan pulley		30
15	Install crankcase, transmission cover, intake and exhaust manifolds and block test	1	40
16	Install engine in chassis		42
		12	35

With the exception of removing and installing the engine, in which two men are used, all of the above operations are performed by one man.

John Muir Poster Contest for 4th Graders

On April 15, Ollie Hamlin was the representative of the Lafayette Historical Society as one of the Judges of the Children's Poster Contest sponsored by the John Muir Memorial Association of Martinez. This was the fifth Annual Poster Contest for 4th grade students of all Contra Costa public and private schools where they displayed their artistic talents for awareness and appreciation for John Muir to humanity. The special theme this year was the "Historical Achievement of John Muir" and "John Muir Quotations."

Volunteer judges from various Historical Societies in Contra Costa County gathered at the John Muir Historic site in Martinez to judge the works of hundreds of original drawings by 4th graders. Each entrant will be recognized, and the winners will receive a special recognition on May 11.

It was a very rewarding experience to observe the talent and enthusiasm of the young artists. A buffet lunch and a tour of the John Muir home followed the judging.

By Ollie Hamlin

Welcomes New Editor

A recent college graduate, history buff, and Lafayette resident Mary Howland Demler is the new Lafayette Historical Society's Newsletter editor. Having studied history in London, Mary is interested to learn more about Lafayette's past. In addition to living in Lafayette, Mary also works in Lafayette at the national headquarters for a garden and pet supply company, where she edits a newsletter for the employees.

An interest in history runs in the Demler family. Mary's family is actively involved in the San Francisco and Sonoma Historical Societies. Her father owns an adobe house in Sonoma, "La Casita," which dates back to the days of General Vallejo. We welcome Mary to the Lafayette Historical Society and look forward to getting to know her better at our annual potluck, which will take place May 14th at 7pm. *To read more about the potluck please see cover page.*

Lafayette Historical Society Board Meeting Minutes

Lafayette Town hall
Meeting Opened at 7:10pm

Present: Tom Titmus, Marechal Duncan, Joseph Van Overeen, George Wasson, Keith Blakeney, Oliver Hamlin, Ruth Dyer, Paul Sheehan, Mary McCosker.

Minutes of the previous meeting approved.

Announcements/correspondence: Lincoln Highway Conference to be in Sacramento, June 11-15, 2002. Mary McCosker's history article appeared in the Sun. Ollie Hamlin will judge John Muir Appreciation Poster Contest.

Special Reports: Potluck Dinner and Meeting to be at Veterans Hall on Tuesday, May 14. Ollie Hamlin and Dick Johnson in charge. Speaker – Bill Eames, or alternates – Olive Wilhelm or Randy Rosso. Speaker to be announced in Newsletter. Fire Engine will not be there, as George Wasson to be away.
Newsletter: New editor is Mary Howland Demler, located by Paul Sheehan. Met with Marechal Duncan and Gary Willcuts and has all materials, including binder of past issues.

Mary Demler
Central Garden and Pet Company
3697 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 350
(925) 282-6161 or (925) 299-0788
Cell phone (925) 286-4498

Ollie Hamlin will get her all mailing supplies. Lynn Garnica prints/copies Newsletter at Lafayette School District Office (925) 284-7011. Jim Sturman prepares Newsletter for mailing.

Old/Unfinished Business: George Wasson took photos of **Elam Brown Plaza dedication**, including President Titmus receiving Proclamation from Supervisor Uilkema.
Petar's cable car now in possession of Mt. Diablo Scholl District, to be restored at Mt. Diablo HS and used by Athletic Department.
George Wasson will contact Dorothy Walker or Gary Willcuts to locate **Lafayette Online** tape.

Community Relations (Marechal Duncan):
Lafayette and Walnut Creek veterans are combining. Walnut Creek group will give proceeds from sale of its property to combined organization. New hall site off Risa Road, below Hillside Inn. Architect will try to incorporate old Lafayette hall's façade/entrance and lumber. The city will buy present hall's site for new library.
$130,000 given for new library's history room or section where artifacts can be displayed. LHS gave $8000. LHS members to be asked to give. Lafayette Community Foundation to have policy regarding designated funds so moneys are used as donors designated. Marechal Duncan will check on this. Tom Titmus will write letter as appropriate.

Landmarks: Jop Van Overveen reported in the 1960's Theron Nelson got little building now between baseball fields at old Community Center, 711 St. Mary's Road. It had been in La Fiesta Square and should be recognized as the Theron Nelson Building by LHS. The land was given by Oliveira family and now owned by City. Jop Van Overveen will pursue the naming issue.

Archives: LHS files will be moved to 7'x 9' lighted closet in library. Room for Friends of...Library file and at least 4 LHS filing cabinets plus small desk. Branding irons are on wall to left of library entrance. Lantern location to be decided. George Wasson brought 7 1970-1971 issues of The Squire for archives.
Nominating Committee: Ollie Hamlin announced members whose terms will end in May: Ollie Hamlin, Mary McCosker, Keith Blakeney, Ruth Dyer. All agreed to be nominated for re-election.

Adjournment at 8:40pm

Ruth Dyer, Recording Secretary

Special Board Meeting following Potluck, May 14.

2001-2002 Directors

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Marechal Duncan 283-6812
Treasurer: Paul Sheehan ...284-1287
Recording Secretary:
Ruth Dryer 283-8312
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Keith Blakeney 284-2221
Janice Crosetti-Titmus 299-2030
Mary McCosker 284-5376
Rob Somerton.....284-9785
Joseph Van Overveen.....283-3650
Bill Wakeman.....283-3908

2001-2002 Committee Chairs

Potluck Dinner: Richard Johnson....283-0199
Archives:
Book Sales: Ruth Dryer..... 283-8312
Community Relations:
Marechal Duncan..... 283-6812
Displays:
Fire Engine: George Wasson..... 284-4603
Historian: Bill Wakeman..... 283-3908
LHS Online:
Membership: Oliver Hamlin.....283-6822
Newsletter:
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Lafayette Historical Society Member Information

(Please photocopy form for additional names)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____
Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____
Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Membership Categories & Annual Dues: (please check one)

____ Life membership--$100.00 (one time fee) ____ Family membership--$10.00
____ Business membership--$50.00 ____ Student membership--$2.50

Please indicate areas of special interest:

___ Annual dinner ___ Archives ___ LHS Online ___ Displays ___ Fire Engine
___ Landmarks ___ News Clips ___ Oral History ___ Photo collection ___ Programs
___ Research ___ Telephoning ___ Walking Tours ___ Other _____

Mail Check for dues $_____ and voluntary Fire Engine Maintenance contribution $_____ to:
LHS, PO Box 133, Lafayette, CA 94549

Lafayette Historical Society CALENDAR

Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner

Date:	Tuesday, May 14, 2002
Time:	6pm Social Hour, 7pm Dinner, 8pm Meeting and Speaker
Place:	Lafayette Veterans Hall, Mt. Diablo & First Street in Lafayette

May Board of Directors Meeting

Date:	Tuesday, May 14th, 2002
Time:	After the Pot Luck Dinner. Members are welcome to stay for the brief Board Meeting.

Lafayette Historical Society
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